

## **ITC TANK FIRE & RESPONSE DEER PARK, TEXAS**

### **BACKGROUND:**

On Sunday, March 17, 2019, Intercontinental Terminals Company (ITC) discovered a tank of naphtha on fire within a tank farm of 15 tanks. EPA deployed two On-Scene Coordinators (OSCs) to integrate into the existing unified command and provide EPA resources and assets to the response. By the next day multiple tanks were on fire, threatening all the tanks within the farm, as well as other tank farms in close proximity. The initial fire was extinguished on Tuesday, March 19; however, a subsequent fire began on Friday, March 22, as well as a failure of the secondary containment which resulted in a massive spill of thousands of barrels product/fire water/foam into Tucker Bayou and the Houston Ship Channel. A Shelter-in-place was issued for the residents and businesses of Deer Park during the initial fire, as well as the subsequent fire, which resulted in the collapse, burning, or damage to all 15 tanks.

### **KEY POINTS:**

- EPA response activities are being transitioned to Texas and demobilization of federal assets is underway.
- ITC has completed the transfer of all materials possible from the damaged tanks until deconstruction of the tanks can begin.
- The Houston ship channel has been reopened with unrestricted access and most of all recoverable material has been removed.
- Approximately 85% of the shoreline has been cleaned-up. Air monitoring continues and will be revisited once tanks are emptied.

### **TALKING POINTS:**

- EPA responded to the incident deploying key equipment, such as the Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology aircraft (ASPECT), which was able to fly above the ITC plant during and after the fire and reignitions to ascertain if there was any immediate danger to those downwind from the plant, and the Trace Atmosphere Gas Analyzer (TAGA), a mobile laboratory capable of real-time sampling of outdoor air or emissions. Additionally, EPA conducted hand-held monitoring to determine downwind concentrations of pollutants resulting from the fire and release.
- During the fires, as well as the response/recovery phase, emissions of benzene from the spilled product continued to cause concern for response workers, neighboring facilities, and communities downwind of the facility. Air monitoring by EPA, TCEQ, Harris County, and ITC was conducted 24-hours a day to provide sufficient data to local officials to assist in making protective action decisions for their communities, as well as ensuring emergency responders were adequately protected.
- The TAGA monitored the ambient air in the communities surrounding and downwind of the ITC facility, and as of today, covered over 7,300 miles with more than 3,800,000 data points in the Houston area.
- The ASPECT flew 27 flights and over 50 hours throughout the area. This data has been invaluable in assessing risks quickly and responding appropriately to this incident. No other parties involved have available technology on par with the ASPECT.
- EPA collected surface water samples to be analyzed for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs), chemical oxygen demand (COD), and oil & grease.
- Air monitoring strike teams have collected over 3,178 instantaneous air monitor readings downwind and around the ITC facility and gathered more than 400 water samples in the Tucker Bayou and Houston Ship Channel.

- Tank Farm Progress:
  - Currently ITC has removed all the material they are able to remove until the tanks are deconstructed. ITC is planning the mechanical disassembly of tanks 80-14, 80-15, 80-13, 80-10 and 80-7, in that order. These are the tanks with remaining sludge/product that may have benzene vapor emissions.
- Recoverable material has been recovered off the Ship Channel and the Shoreline Cleanup and Assessment Technique process and shoreline cleanup is nearing completion. Approximately 85% of the shoreline has been cleaned up.
- EPA is utilizing the tools available to us and we are taking additional steps to make data available to the public, including the Site Response website. One way we are keeping the public informed is through the Story Map Resource, which was created by EPA, in coordination with the TCEQ. The ITC Story Map shows sampling data by location, allowing the public to see what is being measured in their community.
- EPA continues to work with our states, local governments, and federal agencies to develop innovative methods to improve each response.